

BREAKING NEWS» U.P. among areas to receive part of \$40 million for Michigan conservation projects

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Copper piece on island in danger of being relocated

Owners of 28.2-ton chunk want their money

February 24, 2014

JACKIE STARK - Journal Staff Writer (jstark@miningjournal.net) , The Mining Journal

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MARQUETTE - A Presque Isle Park icon is danger of being removed and lost forever for future generations.

The bill is soon coming due for the massive piece of glacial float copper resting on a berm across from the Superior Watershed Partnership's office.

"Time is running out," said Carl Lindquist, executive director of the partnership. "We have to raise the money this year and we've been quietly doing that behind the scenes, but now we're going more public with the community campaign and the (Marquette County) Community Foundation."

Article Photos



Fred Rydholm, pictured here sitting on the record-setting...

Found on a piece of property by two men in 1997, using a handheld metal detector, the world's largest piece of glacial float copper has, in essence, been on loan to the citizens of Marquette since it was brought here in 2010.

The Marquette County Community Foundation's Chief Operating Officer Gail Anthony said the owners - two Hancock men Anthony declined to name - had allowed the copper to be brought to Marquette in 2010, with the intention of having the copper bought and paid for. However, the original deadline came and went, Anthony said, and the owners allowed an 18-month extension beginning in October.

Anthony said the copper has a higher value if it's kept in one piece. Currently, a total of \$255,000 needs to be raised.

The Marquette County Community Foundation has established a special fund dedicated to keeping the 28.2-ton piece of glacial float copper in Marquette.

Float copper is naturally formed and has been carried or "floated" along by the last glacier.

According to a press release issued by the partnership, the Smithsonian Institute has confirmed the giant chunk of copper is the largest piece of glacial float copper in the world, dwarfing the famous Ontonagon Boulder, which weighs in at less than two tons and is currently on display at the Smithsonian.

"It's an incredible asset for the community," Lindquist said. "It is the world's largest specimen. Hundreds of school kids visit it every year, thousands of tourists. Our office is right across from it and we see thousands of people stop every year. It's amazing. We talk to a lot of them and some of them, it's one of the main reasons they're coming to the park."

Lindquist said he and other friends of the late Upper Peninsula historian Fred Rydholm want to ensure the copper stays here, in honor of his memory.

"It was a dream of Fred Rydholm (to bring the copper to Marquette) and this is kind of a labor of love in honor of Fred, to realize that dream," Lindquist said. "He's the reason that it's here to begin with."

Rydholm was instrumental in getting the copper to Marquette, working with the original owners before his death in 2009.

Lindquist said if the money is not raised, the copper will be returned to the owners, who he said will likely smelt it down for industrial use.

"That is their last resort ... they can't afford not to do something with it," Lindquist said. "They know they can sell it on the commercial market, but they'd rather not do that. Fred is the one who worked with them. They are also supportive of Fred's dream for the copper. They'd like to see the money raised and save it from being smelted."

To donate, contact the foundation at 226-7666 or visit www.marquettecountycommunityfoundation.org.

Jackie Stark can be reached at 906-228-2500, ext. 242.

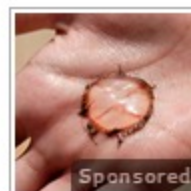
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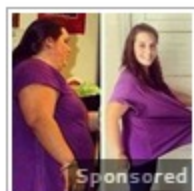
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